Immigration and employment: integration of immigrants

2003/2147(INI) - 27/11/2003

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Claude MORAES (PES, UK) in response to the Commission paper on immigration, integration and employment. The report called inter alia for the management of immigration in the EU to be placed in an overall framework that takes account of the benefits of immigration for all concerned. MEPs believed that migration flows should be managed in such a way as to serve the interests of both the host country and the country of origin. The management of immigration could be part of a response to demographic and economic trends in the EU. However, they emphasised that immigration should not be viewed purely in terms of its economic potential; instead, migration policies should be developed in parallel with additional measures for social, cultural, religious and political integration. For example, the committee supported the idea of granting the right to vote in local and European elections to non-EU nationals who are resident in the EU on a regular basis. MEPs said that employment was crucial to the integration of immigrants. They called for cooperation at EU level to deal with immigration, particularly regarding access to the labour market. Immigration management should not mean sacrificing reform of the labour market, nor should it lead to "cherrypicking" of skilled employees or entrepreneurs from certain developing countries or to the exploitation of immigrant workers. MEPs said that the management of immigration was the necessary counterpart to reform of asylum systems as well as to measures intended to combat illegal immigration. They feared that the current political climate surrounding asylum and illegal immigration was creating an obstacle to cooperation on integration and management of migration and they therefore called on Member States to foster a more responsible debate. Lastly, the Member States were urged to devise systems for regulating legal immigration into Europe and to cooperate among themselves and with the countries of origin.